UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1997/81
27 January 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 23 JANUARY 1997 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to convey the attached communication, dated 22 January 1997, which I have received from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

I should be grateful if you would bring it to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN

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Annex

Letter dated 22 January 1997 from the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolution 1088 (1996), I attached the first monthly report on Stabilization Force (SFOR) operations. I would appreciate your making this report available to the Security Council.

Over the past month, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have witnessed the successful transition from the Implementation Force (IFOR) to SFOR. Operation Joint Guard will enable SFOR to build on IFOR achievements and to contribute to a secure environment necessary for the consolidation and stabilization of peace in the region.

Overall, the situation in the theatre has been calm - ethnic tensions persist, however, and we in the international community cannot afford to underestimate the challenges ahead. As we face these challenges, I can assure you that SFOR will implement its mandate as professionally as IFOR, and it will play its full part in helping to bring lasting peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

(Signed) Javier SOLANA

Appendix

Monthly report to the United Nations Security Council on SFOR operations

SFOR operations

1. Operation Joint Guard began on 20 December 1996, following the termination of Operation Joint Endeavour and the consequent transition from the Implementation Force (IFOR) to the Stabilization Force (SFOR). Under the authority of Security Council resolution 1088 (1996), SFOR will contribute to a secure environment necessary for the consolidation and stabilization of peace by deterring or, if necessary, halting a resumption of hostilities. It will also provide time for political reconciliation and economic reconstruction to gain momentum.

2. Currently, there are approximately 32,000 troops deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina with contributions from all the NATO nations and from the 18 non-NATO countries that participated in IFOR.[1] The new force is expected to be fully established by 3 February 1997, when the next phase of Operation Joint Guard, the stabilization phase, will begin.

3. Over the past month, the situation in the theatre has been calm, in part owing to the winter weather conditions. SFOR troops have conducted area reconnaissance and surveillance operations and inspected the authorized sites for heavy weapons and other forces.

4. The next major milestone in implementation of the Peace Agreement that may have an impact on SFOR operations will be the decision of the Brcko Arbitration Tribunal, expected on 15 February.

Cooperation and compliance by the parties

5. All parties remain in general compliance with the military provisions of the Peace Agreement. Individual breaches continue to occur, however. One cantonment violation was registered in early January, in a weapons site east of Banja Luka, with the removal by Bosnian Serbs of 450 rounds of 7.62 mm ammunition. Unauthorized weapons, mainly small arms, continue to be discovered and confiscated. In mid-January, SFOR troops disabled 11 multi-barrelled rocket launchers that had been confiscated from a Bosniac Government ordnance factory in Novi Travnik in December; the weapons will be destroyed shortly.

6. With respect to freedom of movement and freedom of return, SFOR has discovered and removed a small number of illegal checkpoints over the past month. The risk remains of incidents associated with the return of refugees and displaced persons into the zone of separation. SFOR will continue to work

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[1] Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Jordan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Morocco, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Sweden and Ukraine.

closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Police Task Force (IPTF) and the Office of the High Representative (OHR) to permit the organized and safe return of refugees and displaced persons.

7. In addition, none of the parties is yet judged to be compliant with respect to demining, and mines continue to pose the greatest threat to civilians and troops alike. At a recent meeting of the Joint Military Commission, therefore, to reflect the importance of the demining issue, SFOR defined a reasonable rate of demining activity to be undertaken by the parties. Should targets not be met, additional training and movement restrictions will be imposed. To give impetus to this initiative, arrangements will be made to provide significant training assistance to each of the parties so as to enable them to establish a core of personnel trained in demining procedures. At the same meeting, arrangements were also set in motion for the consolidation of weapons in a reduced number of cantonment sites.

8. The Bosniac and Bosnian Serb parties are still non-compliant in the mandatory return of prisoners of war (POWs). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) records 13 POWs still held in Bosniac and Serb prisons. It is also possible that there may be more POWs detained by the entities.

Cooperation with international organizations

9. SFOR support has been provided to IPTF in its inspection of civilian police stations. All parties have been seeking to store inappropriate weapons. To date, the joint inspections have resulted in the discovery and subsequent destruction by SFOR of approximately 115 mines, 40 anti-tank weapons, 100 machine-guns and over 350 rifles.

10. SFOR has also worked with IPTF to maintain local security. For example, in early January, following increased tension in the northeastern town of Dugi Dio between Bosniacs and Bosnian Serb police, SFOR and IPTF increased their presence in the area.

11. With a view to promoting freedom of movement, and in line with decisions taken at the December 1996 Peace Implementation Conference in London, SFOR is participating in a Freedom of Movement Task Force, set up with participants from OHR, IPTF and a number of countries. The Task Force meets weekly in Sarajevo.

12. SFOR continued to support OSCE in its role with respect to annex I B of the Peace Agreement, including through the recent delivery to the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office of updated data on the parties' weapons holdings in SFOR-authorized sites.

13. SFOR contains a Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) Task Force of over 300 military personnel in theatre, which is providing selective support to OHR and other organizations responsible for implementing the civil aspects of the Peace Agreement. SFOR planners are now working closely with the OSCE Mission to determine requirements for the preparation and conduct of the municipal elections.